



Date: June 24, 2003  
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## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAVEL DECISION TAKES EFFECT

BILLINGS – If you drive a car, truck, all-terrain vehicle, or motorcycle on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in Montana, North Dakota, or South Dakota, you can no longer drive cross-country; you must stay on roads and trails. The Notice of Availability of the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Record of Decision will be published June 27, 2003, in the *Federal Register*. The decision restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong on approximately 5.8 million acres in the three states. Travel on hundreds of miles of open roads and trails will continue.

“The new OHV policy is an important step towards the long-term conservation of our fragile soils, riparian areas, vegetation, and the wildlife species that live in these areas,” said BLM State Director Marty Ott.

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Some exceptions will apply.

“Cross-country travel will continue to be allowed for military needs, fire suppression, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicles in emergencies,” Ott said. Folks can also drive cross-country to campsites within 300 feet of existing roads or trails, after locating their campsite in a non-motorized fashion. The new policy does not apply to snowmobiles nor does it affect areas designated as intensive use areas. The BLM has six of these throughout Montana.

The BLM and Forest Service completed a joint environmental impact statement on OHV travel in early 2001. The Forest Service issued its Record of Decision at that time. Due to different processes, BLM needed to resolve protests prior to issuing its decision.

“In areas where BLM and Forest Service are intermingled, OHV users now have consistent rules,” said Ott. He added that the new policy does not change existing road and trail regulations. “We encourage folks to check locally and obey the signs that are posted. We’ll need everyone’s help to ensure the success of this new policy,” Ott said. He suggested users contact the appropriate local BLM office for additional information regarding the new requirement and current travel information.

Each BLM office will complete a prioritized list of areas for site-specific planning within six months. The site-specific planning could include identifying opportunities for trail construction and/or improvement or specific areas where intensive OHV use may be appropriate or it could designate certain roads as open to travel. The BLM will involve the public in this site-specific travel management planning.

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Factors to be considered in priority setting include: opportunity to provide a variety of OHV recreation experiences, while minimizing resource damage and conflicts; risk of, or current damage to soil, watersheds, vegetation or other natural, cultural, and historic resources; potential to spread noxious weeds; avoidance of riparian/wetland areas; need to minimize harassment of wildlife or degradation of wildlife habitat; safety of all users; resolution of conflict between interim travel restrictions and established management plans; history of new roads and trails being created by users; impacts to T&E and sensitive species; special management areas; and opportunities to join other planning efforts.

For more information on priority setting or site-specific planning in the field offices, contact Eddie Bateson at the Billings Field Office, 406-896-5241; Steve Hartmann or Rick Hotaling at the Butte Field Office, 406-533-7600; Rick Waldrup or Tim Bozorth at the Dillon Field Office, 406-683-2337; Brandi Hecker or Jodi Camrud at the Havre Field Station, 406-265-5891; Chuck Otto at the Lewistown Field Office, 406-538-7461; Rich Adams at the Malta Field Office, 406-654-5100; John Fahlgren at the Glasgow Field Station, 406-228-3750; David Squires or David Jaynes at the Miles City Field Office, 406-233-2810; Brian Maiorano or Nancy Anderson at the Missoula Field Office, 406-329-3914; Don Ruffledt or Doug Burger at the North Dakota Field Office, 701-227-7700; or William Monahan or Marian Atkins at the South Dakota Field Office, 605-892-7000.

Additional information is also available on the internet at [www.mt.blm.gov](http://www.mt.blm.gov).

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